

To Whom It May Concern:

I am speaking in support of the official designation of October as Italian and Italian American Heritage Month.

My name is Frank J. Travisano and I live at 59 Tedesco Drive in Waterbury, Ct. 06708. Telephone: 203-754-9914.

I had introduced one of the two bills to designate October through my State Rep. Anthony D'Amelio. I am a longtime member of UNICO NATIONAL, Waterbury Chapter, the largest Italian American Service Organization in the United States. As you may be aware, UNICO was founded in Waterbury in 1922. I am also a member of it's national Anti-Bias Committee, which has as it's mission fighting the vile and unfair stereotyping of Italians in movies television and advertising.

We currently have a similar bill pending in congress and the New Jersey Legislature passed this same bill in the last session and it was signed into law by their governor.

The reason we feel this action would be right and proper is the history of America and Connecticut have been greatly influenced by the history of Italy. Over 5.4 million Italians immigrated to the U. S. between 1820 and 1991 and have made enormous contributions to this country in every area. Due to constant unfair stereotyping and a lack of voice among Italians themselves most if not all citizens are not aware of the many struggles Italian Americans faced and still do as the only acceptable prejudice in contemporary America. We feel that it is most appropriate to encourage American History classes to once a year highlight the many contributions Italian Americans have made to this country.

If you to ask people in this country who Tony Soprano is or Don Corleone, just about everyone would be able to answer. Especially with "The Soprano's" arguably the most racist television show ever broadcast since the 1950's "Amos n Andy" Italian Americans have mainly existed in peoples minds as mobsters or ignorant buffoons. Yet if you asked them the following facts they would be dumfounded. These facts are among many others:

Two Italians signed the Declaration of Independence.

There were approximately 11 known cases of lynching of Italians, the most notorious of which was the largest mass lynching in American history when 11 Italians were hung or shot gunned to death in New Orleans in 1891. There were also verified lynchings in Colorado, Mississippi, Arkansas, Florida, Illinois and West Virginia. Indeed, we are second only to African Americans.

Italians were also interred in World War 2 although in not as great numbers as Japanese.

An Italian designed the Lincoln Memorial. One was also the chief carver on Mt. Rushmore.

An Italian, Constantine Brumudi (sp?) was honored last year by congress. He painted the murals at the US Capitol.

I could go on endlessly but you get the picture. Again it seems only fitting that a people with such a diverse history in this nation be honored so that future generations learn the truth, not Hollywood's version of the truth.

I urge you to pass this bill and we at UNICO Chapters across the state stand ready to aid school systems in the gathering and teaching of this information.

Respectfully Submitted,
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